ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We wish to acknowledge Tre's friends that came together and made this ceremony possible.

Duncan Teague for extending his hospitality by opening his home as a planning space.

Sonya M. Hemphill for keeping our minds on our task.

Brooke Perry for her calming presence.

May the Universe enfold you in all of it's beauty ...

We wish to thank all of Tre's friends who shared their talents with us and made this service successful.

We extend a special note of gratitude to the kind hearts who gave freely to ensure all expenses were met.

We thank you, the members of the community, friends, aquaintances, and loved ones for coming to share your love and memories.

To the Johnson Family, thank you for sharing Tre' with us. We have all become better people for having known him. Our prayers and meditations are with you in your time of need and always.

Affectionately yours,

David-Michael Searchy
Anthonly C. Daniels (Tony)

Program Design by: Michael-Tone

A CELEBRATION OF LIFE

Memorial Services
for
R. Leigh (Tre') Johnson

The First Existentialist Church
4700 Candler Drive, NE
April 28, 1996 at 2:00 PM

OBITUARY

There are a number of ways to describe **R. Leigh "Tre" Johnson**. One could begin by telling you about his great talents: soul stirring singing, his frank honest writing on the black gay experience or his activist's roar. But it seems most appropriate to describe this kind gentle hero as a great spirit with abundant determination.

Tre was raised in Atlanta, Georgia, and always had a family that supported and loved him. He was the youngest and only son of a blues singing father and devoutly pious Jehovah's Witness mother. Tre recalled some of his earliest memories are of hearing music and singing with his dad. He credits his mother with being his anchor and cherishes her compassion and support all through out his life. Though sheltered by the love of family, Tre certainly bore the cross growing up in the deep south. He testifies this way: *"being a sissy and a light skinned black is heavy, but having AIDS is the cherry on top."*

Tre's battle with AIDS began in 1990 when he was diagnosed at 19 years old. Now at 25, six years later, he has made peace with the disease that has so ravaged his body and changed his life. He shares with confidence, "*AIDS came to look for heroes*". And Tre is indeed a hero, having endured sickness and having worked hard to see to it that the plights of people living with AIDS as well as black gays and lesbians are heard.

Tre Johnson credits his openness about AIDS and his sexuality with the fact that he is not ashamed. He adamantly believes that shame keeps black gays vulnerable.

Tre has numerous accomplishments. He is a proud graduate of Northside School of the Arts. His poetry and prose have appeared in the "Amethyst Magazine", "Southern Voice", "The James White Review" and "Eyeball". He has appeared on local and national stages, as well as in theaters abroad: London, France and Brussels. Most recently he appeared in several local productions, among them are "Legends Past and Present", "Souls On Fire" and "Warren".

According to Tre, he writes and performs to break the silence: "*We must speak now or forever be silenced*". With no apologies, Tre says, "*I'm wearing all of my titles: PWA, gay, black, southern and man*".

R. Leigh Johnson (Tre')
The Artist

Tre' was blessed with a beautiful voice, as well as many other talents. Only his writing surpassed his vocal talents.

He felt that his training at Northside School of the Arts, his Alma Mater, was a factor in his survival.

Tre' was very giving of his talents, and was responsible for helping several of Atlanta's Black Gay and Lesbians artist to emerge from obscurity. He was always including others in his productions and writing projects. He believed that to survival as Black Lesbian and Gay Artist we needed to be more supportive of one another.

He was always willing to lend his talents to raise the consciousness of the community and heightened their awareness about issues he felt strongly about. More often than not, the issue would be AIDS.

Tre's voice was sound, for once so young, and his accomplishments remarkable.

R. Leigh Johnson (Tre')
The Activist

"We are not all finger-popping hair dresser Drag Queens just like all Lesbians are not beer-guzzling motorcycle driving bearded women", "We *must break the stereotypes and we must represent ourselves*". (quote from an Ect. article, Oct. 1993)

Tre' was a different kind of activist. He was not at every rally or political fundraiser. But, wherever he was, his voice was heard and his thoughts and opinions were made loud and clear. Also, there were times when Tre' was present at many functions and it was obvious, to those of us that knew him, that he was not well enough to be there. He would be there as support for those of us who are still fighting T*he Good Fight*. He often did this, sacrificing, to make sure that our voices were heard, our stories were being told, and most importantly, that they were being told by us.

"*AIDS is a time bomb ticking in our community. The disease is fueled by ignorance, confusion, misinformation and lies*". "*Our silence is killing us.*"

Until we conquer that silence, as a black lesbian and gay community, we will be behind. We must liberate ourselves, have a Harriet Tubman attitude about black lesbian and gay freedom. We must break down stereotypes.

Tre hoped that one day when black lesbians and gays look in the mirror or in each other's eyes, they will no longer be scared of their own reflection. They will not be ashamed to claim who they are.

Tre's art was his most effective tool as an activist. And it is through his art that he became an activist. Having the courage to challenge silence publicly definitely qualifies you as an activist. Tre' took his message to various stages, local and regional, to bookstores: Charis and Outwrite, and the air waves of 89.3 WRFG Radio. Debra Pageant, host of the Lesbian and Gay radio show, "Gay Graffiti" had Tre' as a guest on numerous occasions giving him the opportunity to reach a larger audience and further challenge the silence that still exist in our communities.